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ABSTRACT

Too little emphasis is placed on instructional supervision in special language programs for limited-English-proficient students. Such supervision can provide a mechanism to promote the growth of instructional staff, improve the instructional program, and lead to curriculum development. Many supervisors are undertrained and unable to provide leadership and supervisory support. Clear and specific competencies, roles, and responsibilities for direct in-class supervision of bilingual or English-as-a-second-language teachers are needed. Among the needed competencies are: sensitivity for diverse linguistic and cultural classroom settings; general knowledge of program development, planning, and evaluation; knowledge of the subject matter necessary for implementation of instructional methods; skill in designing and implementing instructional strategies to help students develop proficiency in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); skill in dual language development and assessment; leadership in the program evaluation process; ability to develop a well-organized inservice education program; ability to assist in diagnosing student needs, interpreting assessment instruments, and using results for identification and placement; engaging administrators and program staff to solve problems; skill in materials and equipment evaluation and selection; interaction with individual teachers concerning specific instructional issues; and the ability to promote positive community relations. (MSE)

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SUPERVISION IN SPECIAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Research in the area of instructional leadership within the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) is greatly needed. While a recent review of ESL research revealed an increase in the number of studies dealing with instructional approaches, language learning theories, ESL curriculum, and learning-aid study strategies, supervision of teaching in ESL programs was mentioned only occasionally in studies related to teacher training.

One significant study which supports the argument for effective supervision of special language programs was conducted by Valverde in 1979. In a three month survey of bilingual programs in three states--California, Arizona, and Texas--Valverde attempted to determine the extent of instructional leadership in bilingual education. He discovered that supervision of instruction is, in fact, one of the most neglected aspects in the process of implementing dual-language programs in the public schools.

The study concluded that current supervisory practices of bilingual education programs were random, unsystematic, and in most cases virtually nonexistent. Valverde proposed that major deficiencies in the supervision of these programs could be eliminated by clearly defining staff roles and providing the training needed to establish an effective program.

The importance of high quality instructional supervision in all educational programs is unquestionable. Those interested in special language programs of limited-English proficient (LEP) students should therefore direct sufficient time and effort to the leadership sector through instructional supervision. Supervision, when properly practiced,

can provide a mechanism to: (1) promote the growth of instructional staff members, (2) improve the instructional program for LEP students, and (3) foster effective curriculum development.

Current literature presents a view that supervisors and teachers hold divergent views regarding supervisory effectiveness. A decade ago, Blumberg (1974) stated that teachers felt that supervisors were out of touch with classroom needs, were not sincere, and lacked interpersonal communication skills. A more recent survey by Blumberg (1980) upheld these teachers' views, indicating that general supervisory personnel apparently lack the bilingual training to fulfill most of their assigned duties and responsibilities. Other research studies stated that general supervisors are not technically competent in the performance of those tasks most directly related to ESL or Bilingual teacher's work and to the improvement of those specific tasks, these teachers and supervisors tend to avoid one another (Alfonso and Goldberry, 1982).

Many supervisors assigned as curriculum supervisors are placed in the supervisory role for special populations programs, yet are not adequately trained to implement or supervise programs, designed for LEP students. Hence, the instructional leadership sector is missing from the overall program, and the ESL teacher is left with a severely limited instructional support network. Under these conditions teachers are left to their own devices in building an effective program.

Valverde reported in another study that only 5% of the supervisory staff of Texas ISD's are certified by the Texas Education Agency as having successfully completed an academic program in supervision. Many of the Texas school districts, furthermore, circumvent the requirement of supervisory credentials by appointing instructional support staff as "resource teachers."

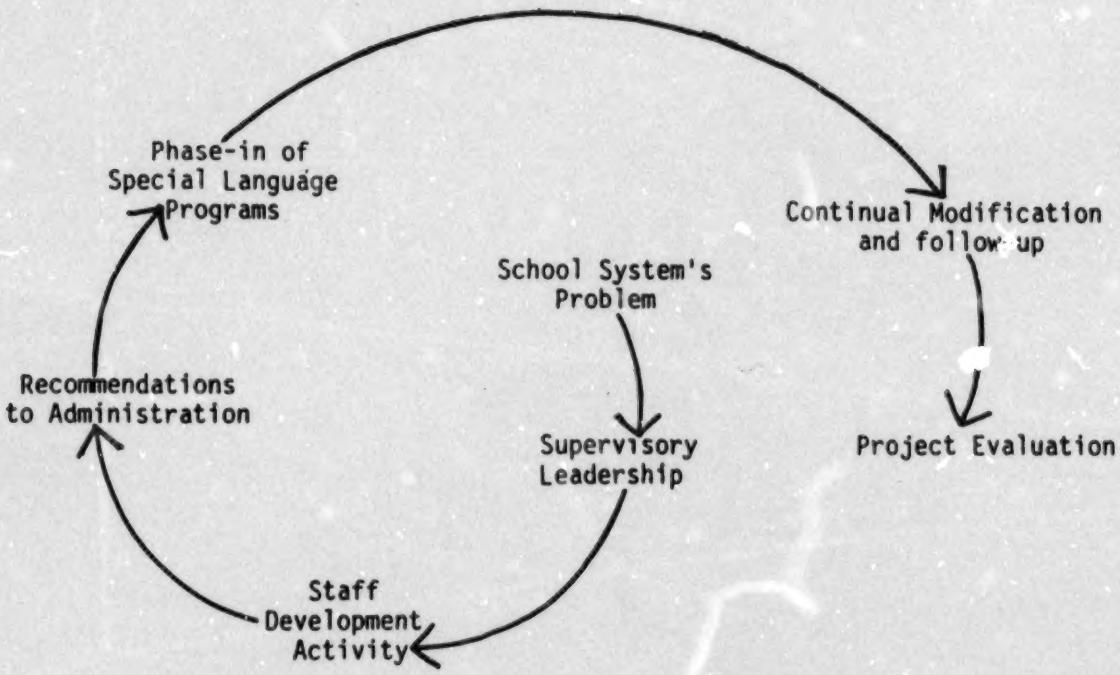
English as a Second Language educators are in need of leadership, with many of the problems confronting them compounded due to the lack of leadership and supervisory support. Although competencies have been identified for ESL teachers, the implementation and effectiveness of an ESL program goes beyond classroom competencies, encompassing the realization that competent supervisors and instructional leaders in programs designed for LEP students are of primary importance.

It has been almost five years since the publicaton of Valverde's study, and the instructional supervision of dual language programs is still unstable and relatively undefined. Supervisory conditions of special language programs are currently better than they were five years ago, but additional research is needed to provide clarity of the roles, responsibilities, and interpersonal skills needed for developing an effective instructional leadership component in special language programs. The goal of this paper is to reinforce an awareness of the need for improving supervisory leadership in programs designed for LEP students.

Instructional Improvement

Determining the focus for assistance needs to be a primary activity of supervisory leadership. This focus becomes a function of the educational philosophy and goals of the instructional program. The main concerns involved in special language programs are (1) who will be involved? (2) what assistance is needed? and (3) what rate of implementation is realistic? Very often supervisory leadership is accused of data gathering without subsequent analysis and interpretation, a situation akin to that of the guidance counselor who has the means to provide depth and breadth to planning student programs, but who may not put his information to optimal use. Kopp and McNeff (1969) originally developed a model for elementary school programs in which the principal is adaptable in determining the

Figure 1



The major concepts which have influenced the development of this model came from Kopp and McNeff (1969), Guidance Handbook for Personnel of Elementary Schools.

focus of assistance for the special language program (see figure 1.) This model, properly implemented, can provide input, leadership, and follow-up essential for effective special language programs. Involving special language program teachers in curriculum development and design of evaluation tools often used by supervisory staff could lead to a more effective program implementation, an to more objective program evaluation.

A special language program designed for teaching LEP students needs clarity and specificity of competencies, roles, and responsibilities for direct in-class supervision of the bilingual or ESL teacher. Special language programs that address the meaningful implementation model can provide the instructional leadership needed to support program effectiveness.

Supervising Competencies

The supervisor of a special language program needs the knowledge and practical experiences of teaching linguistically diverse students in order to provide instructional improvement in bilingual or ESL classrooms. Often we find that supervisors of special language programs lack the training and the teaching experience necessary to supervise and evaluate teachers of LEP students, and therefore are unable to direct and guide the teacher's teaching or offer suggestions on the best way to teach ESL Methodology or perhaps model a teaching lesson if asked and are unable to evaluate the ESL teacher's teaching in an effective way.

The supervisory personnel assigned to provide leadership to special language programs are basically responsible for the design and implementation of the program, evaluation of student needs, implementation of instructional methods and strategies, procedures, and assessment of language dominance and proficiency.

In the field of bilingual or ESL education, the primary goal of the supervisor is to provide in-class support to classroom teachers. The

supervisor's role is basically that of a resource leader. The supervisor should provide development along with needed information and practical experiences for professional improvement of the teachers he/she supervises. In addition to supervisory functions, the supervisor is often times requested to carry out general administrative functions. Lucio and McNeil (1979) stated that conditions in school situations do not always permit the operation of the logic-tight compartments of line and staff or authority and influence. In the implementation of special language programs, supervisors are sometimes delegated authority and held responsible for results. They must therefore hold others responsible for carrying out instructions.

The bilingual or ESL supervisor must establish a special cooperative relationship with the classroom teacher. They must establish a "helping relationship" in order for the supervision to be effective and bring about instructional change. Too, communication between the special language teacher and the supervisor is helpful and promotes the cooperative effort needed.

There are several major competencies supervisory of special language programs need to fulfill:

1. Demonstrate a sensitivity for diverse linguistic and cultural classroom settings;

2. Demonstrate general knowledge of program development, planning, and evaluation;

3. Demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter necessary for implementation of bilingual of ESL instructional methods;

4. Demonstrates skill in designing and implementing instructional strategies to develop the student's specific listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English, or in a dual language if supervising a bilingual classroom;

5. Demonstrate skill in dual language development and assessment;

6. Provide leadership in the ESL or bilingual program evaluation process;

7. Develop a well-organized inservice education program relative to the needs of ESL/bilingual teachers;

8. Assist the school staff in the diagnosing of the needs of LEP students, interpreting assessment instruments, and utilizing results for identification and placement;

9. Encourage school administrators and participating staff in identifying and solving instructional problems related to coordination of regular and special language programs;

10. Assist in the evaluation and selection of instructional programs materials and equipment with regard to supporting the ESL or bilingual program;

11. Focus interaction with bilingual or ESL teachers on specific instructional strategies, demonstration teaching, content questions, etc; and

12. Encourage and promote positive community relations throught effective dissemination of information.

The general competencies suggested in this paper are dependent on program design, implementation, and commitment from each school district. In the State of Texas, the Texas Education Agency has designated 39 teacher competencies within the following five areas: 1) language, linguistics, and content; 2) culture; 3) testing methods; 4) instructional methods; and 5) instructional material use. Teachers and supervisors in the Texas Special Populations Language programs must use this list of competencies as criteria for improving teacher performance since they are considered crucial to effective instruction within a classroom setting of limited-English students. The monitoring of special language program implementation by the Texas Educational Agency is conducted using a "monitoring checklist" which includes items from the list of competencies. This checklist can be adapted and utilized by the local school district to help the special language teacher and supervisor evaluate teacher performance and program effectiveness.

In summary, I believe the literature thus far reviewed clearly defines the need for instructional leadership in programs identified for limited-English proficient students, and efforts to develop a delivery mechanism for leadership can yield multiple benefits to special language programs. It is likewise clear that through the use of applied research conducted with field-test programs and more holistic approach to supervision, a clearer definition of the role of supervision can be realized. Instructional leadership has been lacking in special programs designed for LEP students, and it is time to evaluate and prioritize the instructional problems confronting minority students placed in programs addressing special populations.

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